



Marketing Online:

Surveys & Email Polls

Benchmark
EMAIL

Reconnect with Email Surveys

It is the perfect time to work at re-establishing the connections you have with your customers and prospects. [Email marketing](#) offers an easy and effective way to reach that audience aBent marketers are not using nearly enough is the [email survey](#).

The email survey is a powerful tool, and when used correctly, can be the key to opening the door to the valuable two-way communications that foster strong relationships. It is a simple way to show that you actually care about what your audience thinks. More importantly, it is an easy way to collect feedback that can improve your efforts on so many fronts. If you already use email to communicate, the survey should be a regular fixture in your marketing mix.

Companies have long understood the importance of conducting surveys to gather customer feedback. In fact, it has been a common practice in the business world for some time. Traditionally, surveys were conducted via phone and direct mail. In recent times, businesses have turned to the internet to obtain the feedback they need in an easier and more cost effective way.

Email surveys have numerous advantages over their traditional counterparts. Not only is [direct mail](#) more costly and time consuming, but it is also less effective. It takes a considerable effort for a consumer to participate in a survey they receive in the mail. They must take it out of the envelope, read it over, fill it out, seal it into another envelope, and then drop it in the mailbox. With email, all the recipient has to do is open the message, answer the questions, and click “send.” The hassle-free aspect gives [email marketers](#) the potential to receive a much better response.

In this report, you will discover the unique benefits of [email surveys](#), and learn what it takes to use them effectively.



What are the Benefits of Email Surveys?

The main draw of [email surveys](#) is interaction. By sending out a survey, you are essentially giving your audience an invitation to say what's on their minds. It is strategy that gets your audience involved, and also returns that vital information needed to make the right adjustments. The fast, efficient delivery of email adds to the convenience of being able to revamp your [email campaigns](#) on the fly and execute an enhanced targeting strategy.

While the email survey may seem like the simplest of concepts, it is one of those basic little components that can make a huge difference in your results. Regularly conducting surveys allows you to reap benefits such as:

- **Engaging Communications** – Conducting an email survey is another way of inviting your audience to converse and share what's on their mind. A survey is an engagement tool that if crafted precisely can pull your readers in and resonate better than most of the other communications you normally send them.
- **Performance Insight** – If you really want to know how you are doing, just ask your customers. With a good [email survey](#), you can learn exactly which areas of your business are in need of improvement.
- **Innovative Business Ideas** – Your customers can be the best source for new and promising ideas. Ask the right questions and they can help you improve your exiting offerings, or launch new ones that make your portfolio even more attractive.
- **Trends Uncovered** - A good survey can help you benefit beyond boosting engagement levels. Pay close attention and you may be able to spot important trends in feedback that enables you to get ahead, and enjoy a nice competitive advantage.
- **Customer Satisfaction** – Having a high level of customer satisfaction doesn't mean everything is perfect. It could be the result of always allowing your customers to voice an opinion whenever they feel the need. A survey expands on this, giving customers the chance to have their say without interruption, and in turn, giving you the opportunity to meet their satisfaction by following up on the feedback.
- **Customer Retention** – A well designed survey can be a key component in your customer retention program. By asking questions that quiz your audience on areas such as support and pricing, you can find out what it takes to keep customers around.
- **Customer Loyalty** – An [email survey](#) can also play a key role increasing loyalty. This comes from gathering feedback that exposes what customers like, and don't like about your business. Once you uncover what has kept them around all this time, you can concoct a strategy that keeps them coming back, and referring your business to others.



These are just some of the many benefits email surveys have to offer. They provide a way to get a better feel for what your audience wants, and deliver without having to base your [email marketing strategy](#) on bold predictions. The key of course, is understanding their importance and how to put them to work.

Surveys vs. Polls

Surveys and polls are often implemented to accomplish the same goal of gathering feedback. And though they are sometimes used interchangeably from a figurative standpoint, they are actually quite different. In short, a poll typically asks a single question, while a survey may ask a series of questions. Let's take a closer look at each component to see how else they differ.

Polls are designed to get quick opinions. Surveys, on the other hand, are usually more extensive, able to support more questions and more formats. An email survey can be designed to gather opinions on a new product or service, make determinations about content, or gauge the level of customer service. It presents a degree of flexibility that helps you tackle almost any goal that can be accomplished by acquiring the right feedback.



While you can do a lot more with a survey, the power of the poll should not be underestimated. This tool is best served when you need information to make fast, yet strategic decisions for your business. An [email poll](#) can be related to your business, current events, or general topics that are likely to resonate with your audience. The swiftness and convenience of polling makes it beneficial for all parties involved. You ask the questions, your readers respond, and instantly get to view the results. It creates a sense of community that makes your audience feel as if they are playing an integral role in your success.

Types of Email Surveys

The great thing about a survey is that it can be directly included in your message, allowing you to approach your audience instead of waiting for them to come to you. As far as email surveys go, you generally have two formatting options: HTML and plaintext. Both have their advantages and disadvantages, which we will briefly touch on below.

HTML Email Surveys

On the surface, HTML email surveys are a beautiful concept with very little downside. HTML gives you the ability to design a campaign that turns the survey into the actual message. This allows recipients to interact with the content and answer the questions as they would on a website right from their inbox. For the consumer who regularly interacts with email, this is just about as convenient as it gets.

HTML email surveys also have disadvantages, with the main one being that HTML itself is such a complex technology in the inbox. HTML is well known for its ability to act as the foundation for JavaScript, PHP, Ruby and other programming languages, but unfortunately, these technologies are a major security risk when introduced to the inbox and can be automatically stripped out to protect recipients. This is a factor that could make your beautiful, feature-rich survey a shell of itself when it is finally opened. There is

also the longstanding issue of some mail clients having difficulty rendering HTML.

Plaintext Email Surveys

With plaintext, you are keeping your [email survey](#) as simple as possible using basic text to compose your questions. This format may suffice for readers with email clients that have a hard time rendering HTML, but the presentation of your survey will be dull, to say the least. In addition, ASCII coding practices must be followed in order to present your survey in a comprehensive format readers can understand, which often makes creating a simple plaintext survey more difficult than initially perceived.

Since using an email survey effectively can be such a challenge, some marketers opt to include a link that directs recipients to the questionnaire on their website. While this method can serve as a viable alternative, it also defeats the purpose of an email survey.

Benchmark Email makes it simple to incorporate a survey or poll directly into your email, giving you a variety of formatting options and the ability to track your responses. Customize your questionnaire and send it with your [email marketing campaigns](#), or publish on your website, and gather feedback through both channels.

Designing an Effective Email Survey Strategy

So now that you know conducting surveys can be a powerful marketing strategy, how do you go about composing your own? Do you quiz customers on your products or services? Question your subscribers about frequency? Grill them for information that will be useful in creating different [contact list segments](#)? All that is up to you, but we will walk you through the process of creating an effective survey strategy. When designing your questionnaire, keep the following in mind:

- **Keep It Short and Sweet** – The [email survey](#) gives you a chance to learn more about your audience, but you do not want to use a single opportunity to pump them for all the information you can. Be respectful of their time by keeping your survey brief and to the point. Anything more than 20 questions might be pushing it, and actually result in more harm than good in terms of participation.
- **Give an Approximate Time Frame** – How long will it take subscribers to finish your survey? They will appreciate a rough time estimate, so it is wise to complete it yourself to give them a better idea of what they're in for. Whether it's 5 questions or 20 questions, consumers usually do not mind as long as they know what to expect.
- **Seek Guidance** – Are your subscribers really thrilled with your content, or would they like to see something different? A good survey or [online poll](#) can help you uncover the truth. Use the questionnaire to learn what your audience prefers in terms of products, services, pricing or other areas that could potentially benefit from change. You can learn even more by asking them how likely they would be to



buy or respond to new offerings or content.

- **Make Them Want to Participate** - Even though the feedback you obtain from a survey ends up benefitting both parties when used correctly, some of the people on your [contact list](#) will need a little more convincing than others. Let's be real – people have tons of stuff to do, and answering survey questions probably isn't at the top of the list for most. Realizing this, you may want to consider coming up with a reward that compensates them for their time. The incentive could be a generous discount, a free download, a good how-to list – anything that causes them to see the value in participating.
- **Leave It Open** – One of the most effective surveying methods is to leave some of your questions open-ended with no definitive answers. For example, you could compose your questions in a manner that gets your audience to tell you exactly what they think about the design of your [holiday email templates](#), or reveal the weak points in your strategy that require fine-tuning. The open-ended method is your opportunity to let participants freestyle a bit and say what's really on their mind, so give your questions some thought to ensure that they deliver valuable feedback.
- **Share the Results** – Conducting an email survey allows you to identify new insights and important trends in your business. It is information that can be used to create a better overall experience for your audience. Since your audience provided the feedback, why not let them see the fruits of their labor by sharing the results? With the right approach, this method will demonstrate the value of their participation, as well as your commitment to keeping them satisfied.
- **Show Your Gratitude** - The feedback you get from an [email survey](#) can work wonders for your business performance. Your audience obviously plays a huge part in the process, so it is only right to thank them for the time they took out of their busy schedule or relaxing day to participate. Sending a simple, personalized message to show gratitude to everyone who took part could be enough to create that feeling of inclusion that leads to loyalty.



Find an Optimum Sending Frequency

Consumers demand more control of the marketing content they interact with, and [creating an email survey or poll](#) is an easy, yet effective way to give them the control they desire. It allows you to find out how people are interacting with your content while delivering the added benefits of increased engagement levels and stronger bonds with your audience. Having said that, you do not want to abuse the power of surveying by using it too frequently. Lay it on too heavy and it might cause your subscribers to feel as

if you are prying too deep and invading their privacy.

So how often should you conduct surveys? There is no right or wrong answer. In large part, it depends on how often you contact your subscribers to begin with. If you communicate with your audience through an [email newsletter](#) once a month, it probably would not be a good idea to ask them what they think about the content every week. By assessing your current sending schedule, your response rates, and immediate needs, you will not only come up with an ideal frequency, but also put yourself in the position to enjoy all the benefits [email surveys](#) have to offer.



About Benchmark Email

Take powerful features by the dozen, sophisticated list management, hundreds of email templates, ultra-precise reports and dazzling email and video email. Now, package all that together for an extremely affordable price. Sound appealing? That's us.

There's a reason – or 100 – that more than 73,000 users trust us with their email marketing campaigns. With a second-to-none feature set, headache-free tools that make every campaign a snap and extremely reasonable price plans, we're the email marketing service for businesses of all shapes and sizes.

At Benchmark, we're more than email marketing experts, we're innovators. Our main aim is to perfect our email marketing service, but we also follow social networking, search engine optimization (SEO) and Web 2.0 just so our 100% Web-based software is completely compatible with the ever-changing Internet world.

No other service gives you this robust, standard range of features for just \$9.95 a month to start. Find out for yourself by enrolling in our free, 30 day trial at www.benchmarkemail.com/register.

Contact Benchmark Email

We welcome your feedback and would love to talk with you about your email marketing needs. Please contact us at the addresses below.

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